

VETERANS' SERVICES

Fiscal Year 2008

The Department of Veterans' Services continues to offer assistance to veterans' and their families through a number of Federal and State programs. The State veterans' benefit program provides temporary assistance to veterans and their families who qualify to receive benefits and can show need. These benefits provide for medical care and cash for living expenses.

The Department of Veterans' Services will also aid veterans and their families in the filing of federal forms that are necessary for them to receive a wide range of benefits provided by the Veterans' Administration. The Department now has access to many veteran-related internet sites and government agencies.

FISCAL YEAR 2008

State-Wide:

The Patrick-Murray administration launched a new program for veterans' empowerment and suicide prevention. Undersecretary for Veterans' Services, Coleman Nee, concluded the program by introducing the SAVE Outreach Coordinators who will travel throughout the state to meet with veterans and their families discussing the broad range of benefits and services available to them. Each Outreach Coordinator has been assigned a specific region within the Commonwealth where they will work in collaboration with local Veterans' Service Officers and existing community resources.

Dial-a-Lawyer for Veterans sponsored by the Massachusetts Bar Association and U.S. Trust in conjunction with the Department of Veteran Services is offering free legal advice for veterans who have legal questions involving access to benefits, family issues, employment concerns and landlord/tenant matters.

Locally:

The Veterans' Department with the assistance of the Veterans' Group sponsored a Veterans' Informational Fair this year in October at the Veterans of Foreign Wars building on Main Street.

The turnout for the Fair was low, only reaching about eight veterans. Upon reflection, this first year was a success in terms that we got a group of concerned veterans in this community together to assist our community. Next year has already been discussed and we will try to expand it to be county-wide and include surrounding communities in our outreach efforts.

The schools in Amherst were asked to help in the Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony. They responded favorably and we had more attendees for this year's parade than in the past.

Operation Recognition is a program that was expanded in the Welcome Home Package. It allows high schools to award diplomas to World War II, Korean, and Vietnam veterans who left school for good upon being drafted or enlisted in the military and have not continued on with their education. Along with the assistance of the Regional High School Principal and the Superintendent, this department sent out postcards searching for any veteran who would like to receive his/her high school diploma on the coming Veterans' Day.